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**John L. Cattelan
Executive Director, Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs
H.B. 5037, AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR
THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023
Appropriations Committee
February 17, 2022**

Representative Walker, Senator Osten and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

My name is John Cattelan and I represent the Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs. The Alliance represents 21 YMCAs and 33 childcare centers across the state of Connecticut. The Alliance would like to share some of its concerns regarding Governor Lamont's proposed budget.

Before I share my concerns, I would like to thank Governor Lamont for proposing an allocation of \$4.5 million to fund the summer enrichment program. This was a program that allowed over 1,800 children to attend one of our Y camps this past summer. Many children who would typically not attend summer camp were able to because of this program.

However, we do have concerns regarding the lack of investment in childcare programs.

The proposed budget doesn't provide funds to raise Care4Kids provider payment rates despite the fact that CT only pays at the 50th percentile of the market for infants and toddlers and only the 25th percentile for preschool while the federal government recommends paying at the 75th percentile of the market rate.

In addition, there is no increase in payments for school readiness in the proposed budget.

During the past 20 years YMCA childcare centers have received one rate increase of three percent for Care4Kids and School Readiness. During that same time, the minimum wage has increased by over 50% and inflation has risen by almost 50% as well.

We also believe that Early Childcare Educators are professionals who should be paid in a manner that reflects the importance of their profession. These professionals are helping our future students learn and grow in an environment that will prepare them for success in K-12 schools and we need to place a public value on these positions. During these difficult times we simply can't ask parents to pay more for their childcare. We need the state of Connecticut to support these professionals. Our YMCAs have had to close classrooms across the state because of our inability to find qualified early childhood educators.

Over 1,200 children utilize the Care4Kids program at one of our YMCAs in Connecticut. Care4Kids helps low to moderate income families in Connecticut. The program is a partnership between the State of Connecticut, the families in the program and the providers who take care of the children. We support making more families eligible for this program.

Quality childcare is a necessity if our state's economy is to return to pre-pandemic levels. Childcare is already unaffordable and without a meaningful increase in reimbursement rates, the state will be making the children care system significantly more expensive. It is imperative that our childcare centers receive a rate increase so that we can continue to provide safe and quality childcare to Connecticut's children.

Thank you.